



# NEWSLETTER

No.115 - July 2007

## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

An important issue for Parish Councils since the end of March has been the consultation Paper on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Although the consultation process started with two options, a single county unitary and the east/west split unitaries it was complicated by some of the District Councils (principally Crewe & Nantwich and Congleton) favouring improved two tier working (although this was not an option within the consultation process). This has divided the County and following the elections on 3 May Chester withdrew support for the east/west split which they had previously campaigned for.

The Association hosted a presentation and questions session on the 11<sup>th</sup> June at Winsford Fire Headquarters with speakers on behalf of the three proposals. The event was chaired by our President, Rt Rev Alan Chesters and there were some 70 representatives of parish councils present. Whilst some individual parish councils have taken decisions responding to the consultation and have decided which option they will support, the Association held a special meeting of its Executive Committee to formulate their response.

In reaching a decision on how to respond, we felt the key issues that needed to be considered were:

- The level of involvement in decision making to be devolved to parish councillors particularly with regard to the ability to vote on area committees to which they have been elected by fellow councillors.

- The commitment to the provisions of resources, financial, material and human to enable parish councillors to be effective.
- Existing charter standards must be maintained or improved.
- Encouragement to establish new parish councils where communities want them.
- Enabling parish councils especially those with Quality Status to take on additional responsibilities for the provisions of services where they wish.

A copy of the response produced by the Association is available on request from the County Office.

However important, this is not the only matter exercising our thoughts. This is the time of the year for outdoor rural activities both large and small. Examples include the Cheshire Show and the Nantwich Show. Your attendance helps support our rural communities especially farming and the associated food industries.

We are entering the holiday season now and for many it will be an opportunity to recharge batteries and reenergise ready to meet the challenges that lie ahead. Many of us will be glad that elections are now over for another 4 years and look forward to addressing some of the issues that have been raised within our parishes – perhaps raised through the Parish Plan processes.

The coming Autumn will present many challenges to parish councils whether or not a decision to establish unitary government in Cheshire is made soon.

**ROGER PARKIN**  
County Chairman

## NO-SMOKING SIGNS FOR BUS SHELTERS

As you may know, under the Health Act 2006, premises must be smoke-free if they are open to the public or if they are used as a place of work and those premises are classed as "enclosed premises" or "substantially enclosed premises" from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2007.

"Substantially enclosed premises are defined as premises which have a ceiling or roof, but there are openings in the walls which are less than half of the total area of walls, including other structures that serve the purpose of walls and constitute the perimeter of the premises. When determining the area of an opening, no account can be taken of openings in which doors, windows or other fittings can be opened or shut. Therefore, where bus shelters have a roof and walls on the sides covering more than half the total wall area available, they will be classed as "substantially enclosed premises".

Cheshire County Council will be installing stickers which state "No Smoking It is Against the Law to Smoke at this Bus Shelter" at "substantially enclosed" shelters which it owns (or jointly owns with the Borough, Town or Parish Council) by 1<sup>st</sup> July 2007. The signs will be positioned on the glass or polycarbonate panel ensuring that it can be read from both inside and out. Note that the law only applies to bus shelters which can be described as "substantially enclosed" and failure to install a sign at such shelters can result in the authority being fined £1,000. For further clarity, after reviewing the style and type of shelters that the County Council is responsible for, "substantially enclosed" shelters are considered to be any which are enclosed but which have openings for entrance and/or exit, or any shelters which have full end panels. Note that cantilever shelters, or shelters which only have half end panels, are not considered to be "substantially enclosed" and therefore the law will not apply in these cases.

Please note that the County Council will **not** be installing No Smoking stickers at any bus

shelters which are wholly owned by the Borough, Town, or Parish Councils, as these are considered to be the responsibility of that individual local authority. However, in order to assist with the process, the County Council is offering to provide stickers (ie No Smoking in this Bus Shelter) to any Borough, Town or Parish Council upon request. There is a limited number available, and so this offer is only available while our stocks last. Note also that it is the responsibility of the Borough, Town or Parish Council to arrange for the stickers to be installed in their respective shelters, although again the County Council may be able to offer assistance with regard to this, or to advise which shelters may be the responsibility of your local authority.

**Christine Garner**  
Principal Policy and Projects Officer  
01244 603407  
[christine.garner@cheshire.gov.uk](mailto:christine.garner@cheshire.gov.uk)

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## THE CHESHIRE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Blue Bache Barn • Burleydam • Whitchurch • Shropshire • SY13 4AW

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## Playground Partnerships 2007 (UK)

Schools within the UK that wish to improve their play spaces have the opportunity to apply for funding through the Playground Partnerships Initiative 2007. A total of £500,000 is available to fund specific improvements and developments to their play environments. Schools can apply for awards of £1,000, £2,000, £5,000 or £10,000. All schools that are shortlisted will receive at least £250. Schools wishing to apply will first of all need to order the free Playground Partnerships resource pack. To be considered for an award, schools need to submit a folder of work ('portfolio of evidence') and completed application form (mainstream or special school) by post. Applicants are encouraged to develop a pupil-led approach; involve the whole school; encourage input from the wider school community and include pupils with special educational needs. The closing date for applications is the 20th July 2007.

[www.playgroundpartnerships.org/staff-room.php#awards](http://www.playgroundpartnerships.org/staff-room.php#awards)

Pat Stephens  
External Funding Officer  
Community Development & Social Policy  
Tel: 01270 537235  
email: [pat.stephens@crewe-nantwich.gov.uk](mailto:pat.stephens@crewe-nantwich.gov.uk)

## NALC – Leaders' Networking Lunch

Following the successful inaugural Leaders' event on the 16<sup>th</sup> March a further event will be held in London on **Friday, 13 July, 2007**.

This event will be a good chance for Leaders to larger councils to:

- share with others experiences of being a Leader to a larger council, (be they good or bad!);
- discuss the political dimension to larger councils, especially after the local council elections;

- share ideas and information about specific council projects;
- spend time with like-minded councillors from around the country;
- develop your network of contacts and maybe make new friends.

This event will be hosted by the Chairman of the National Association's Larger Local Councils' Committee and will also be attended by Cllr. Ken Cleary, Chairman of the National Association. It will start with brief introductions and discussions at the NALC offices in London followed by a sit-down lunch (with wine and soft drinks) at a nearby restaurant.

This will be an excellent networking opportunity for Leaders looking for support, new ideas and fresh contacts at the start of a promising four year term for larger councils. Booking Forms for this event are available from the Cheshire Association's Office (details below). Further details can be obtained from the NALC website at <http://www.nalc.gov.uk>.

## VACANCY CLERK TO LOSTOCK GRALAM PARISH COUNCIL

Applications are invited for the above post from suitably qualified and experienced persons capable of taking full responsibility for the administrative, financial and other aspects of Council business – including attendance at evening meetings.

Previous experience of local government would be desirable but not essential. Must be able to work from home and have own transport.

**Contact:**  
**Mrs Jean Starkey – Clerk to the Council**  
**4 Shavington Way**  
**Kingsmead – Northwich**  
**Cheshire – CW9 8FH**

## CRACKING THE CODE

NALC are hosting an information and update Conference called ***Cracking The Code*** on the revised Code of Conduct, the ethical framework and the implications of both for town and parish councils.

The Conference will take place in **Birmingham on Thursday, 19 July** at the **Hilton Birmingham Metropole Hotel, the National Exhibition Centre**. It is being jointly organised between the National Association of Local Councils and the Standards Board for England.

The programme provides for new inclusions on personal and prejudicial interests, bullying and the disclosure of confidential information. Guidance on support and advice will be given to councils and councillors facing multiple allegations. John Findlay, the NALC Chief Executive, along with persons from the Standards Board For England and the Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors will be in attendance to speak at the event.

The delegate rate is **£70 plus VAT for members** and **£110 plus VAT for non members**. Small member councils with a budgeted income annually of **less than £25,000** will be entitled to the special discount rate of **£35 plus VAT**. Places at this rate are limited to fifty and available on a first come first served basis only.

A booking form for this event is available through the Cheshire Association of Local Councils and further details can be obtained from the NALC website - [www.nalc.gov.uk](http://www.nalc.gov.uk).

## Standards Board relocates

The relocation of the Standards Board has been completed, with the official opening of the new Manchester office on 23 April.

The move has taken place over the last year in a two-phased process aimed at minimising the disruption to the work of the organisation.

The Standards Board has undertaken a big recruitment drive over the last few months to attract new staff with good local government experience and knowledge. A thorough induction process is now well underway.

Commenting on the relocation, Sir Anthony Holland, chair of the Standards Board, said: "We are very pleased with the outcome of the relocation. Everyone has worked incredibly hard to make sure that the process has been a smooth transition and that normal service to our stakeholders has been maintained. The dedication of our staff has been the key factor in the success of the move."

The Standards Board for England is now based at: Fourth Floor, 40 Lever Street, Manchester M1 1BB. For more information visit the website at [www.standardsboard.gov.uk](http://www.standardsboard.gov.uk) or call the main switchboard on 0161 817 5300.

## 2007/8 PAY NEGOTIATIONS-UPDATE

Many of us have been eagerly awaiting news of this year's pay settlement, but unfortunately there is still little to report. A meeting of the NJC for Local Government Services was held on 21 May at which further discussions took place in relation to the 2007/08 pay settlement.

Unfortunately agreement was still not reached. However I understand that a further meeting will take place in the near future.

We will of course keep member councils informed of all further developments and progress.

## ENCLOSURES

### World Rural Women's Day Nomination Form

Your opportunity to nominate your Clerk or female member for this delightful local award.

### Monthly e-mail Update Subscription Offer

Check out the latest communications initiative - an e-mail bulletin signposting what is new and interesting in the parish council world. **FREE!**

*If you would like additional copies of any of the enclosure, contact Susan Harding at the County Office.*